

SHAKESPEARE'S KING LEAR CONCEPT & VISION

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Brief Concept Summary

This production will be set in 1930's East Harlem. Lear's family will be portrayed as the hierarchy of the Italian-American Mafia. The stage, the costumes, and the acting will give the appearance of a black and white mobster movie (think *Scarface/The Godfather/The Killing*).

The World of the Play

The most important elements within the world of the play will be the **lighting**, the **stylistic acting**, and the **set**.

There is a very melodramatic and unique flare to Mafia movie acting. This will no doubt affect everyone within the cast, but especially Lear, the Fool, the brothers, and Cordelia. Mobsters, particularly the men, need to be seeping hubris and overconfidence. The women, who are incredibly powerful throughout this show, need to take it even a step further. They need to have this attitude but cloak it behind traditional-Italian femininity.

The set design for this production will be very familiar to anyone who has watched a movie that takes place in 1930s New York. All three "castles" will be portrayed as interiors of restaurants. This production is not fully embracing minimalism, but we will be utilizing simplicity and the audience's suspension of disbelief.

The most important element within this production will be the lighting. All lighting should follow the gray-scale pallets below and should age the stage dramatically. This is the piece that truly gives it that mafia-film touch that will be recognizable to the audience.

Themes

There are many themes throughout this script, however, the two this production will focus on are sadism and familial betrayal – and given the contents of the play, these overlap frequently.

Examples of Sadism:

It would also be impossible to talk about sadism without mentioning Edmund. Almost everything Edmund does takes advantage of his position under his father to obtain the right of his half brother. When Edmund forges a letter to his father, and then later tells Edgar to run and hide as their father wishes to kill him. He is a victim himself, but he channels his anger through manipulation and wrong doing in hope of reaching someday to his father's status.

Another example is Cornwall. Cornwall is the most power abusive character within the show. He is power hungry, driven further by his greedy wife, and makes up for his lack of morals in smarts. He knows that it would be seen as an injustice to his people to kill Gloucester, so instead he tortures him for the fun of it.

Examples of Familial Betrayal

One example of this is Reagan and Goneril blatantly lying to their father about how much they love him only in hopes of obtaining his power and land. Then, her turning around and not allowing him to keep the only power he was left with, his guard, and throwing him out into the storm

Another example of betrayal is Lear's betrayal of Cordelia. She is the only daughter that actually loves him and respects him and because she is honest with him, he tosses her out without a second thought. This also, in a way, shows Lear's own corruption. He equates praise to love, when the only people who show him love are the people who are honest to him: Cordelia, Kent, and The Fool.

The final leading actions to the climax of the show (when Lear brings on stage a dead Cordelia and then dies himself) all surround this theme as well. Edgar kills Edmund in a duel after enduring his abuse throughout the entire

show, and Goneril poisons Reagan and then kills herself. The collapse of these two families is what makes this show so heartfelt and tragic. No one is able to look past their hubris for the sake of their family.

Tone

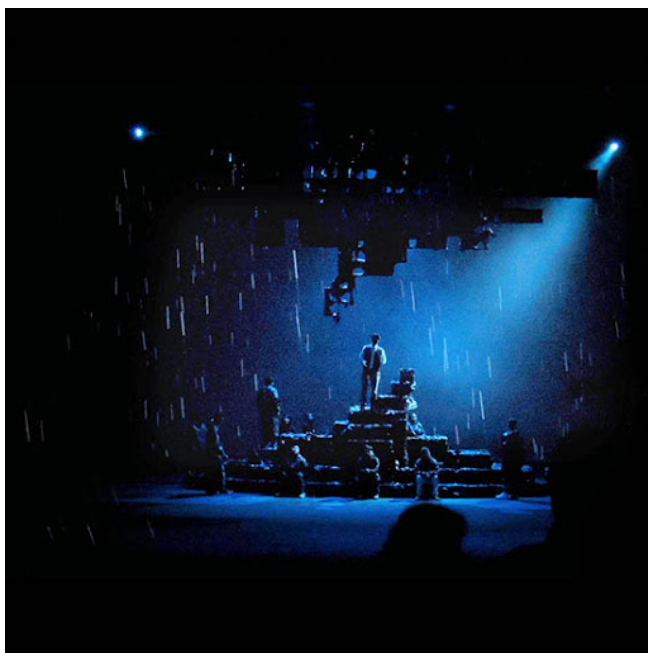
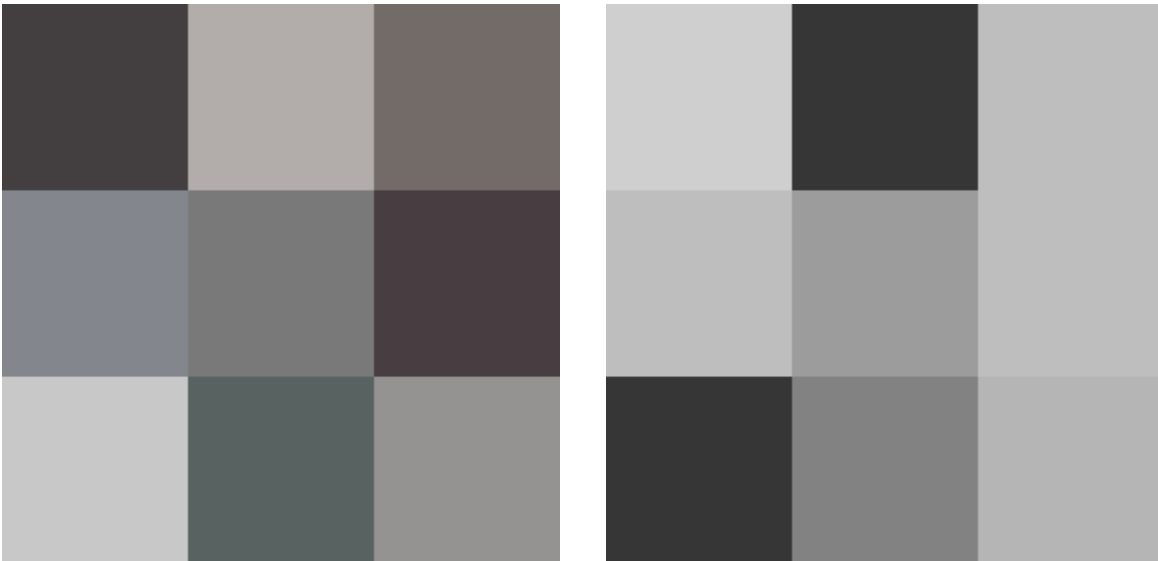
The overall tone of the story is tragic, of course. I want it to have the mobster tragedy flare, without any sense of camp or comedy at the end. It is imperative that the audience sees what happens when hubris and power are combined in an already toxic situation. They should leave the theatre compelled to sadness by the tragedy of the story, and will hopefully leave having learned the most important lesson this show can give: humility.

DESIGN BREAKDOWNS

Lighting/Projection Breakdown

This is the most important technical aspect of the show, the lighting will be the primary hint at the old movie vibe. All of the lighting throughout the show should stick to the greyscale color pallet below. It should age the stage significantly.

The projections will be used to show rain and possibly snow falling as Lear breaks down and the weather gets progressively more dangerous. Picture below.



Scenic Breakdown

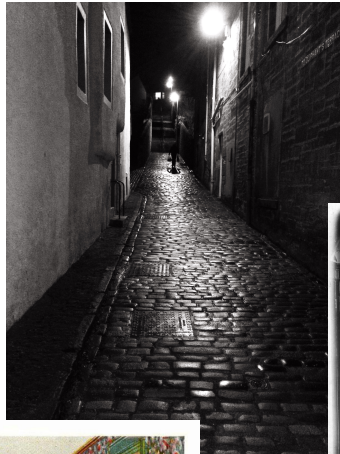
Throughout the script there are many scenes and various settings but there are only three distinctions of spaces: Interior halls, Interior Chambers, and Wilderness.

The interior of “Lear’s castle” as well as Regan’s & Goneril’s castles will be restaurants. The shifts will be displayed by different tablecloths and table toppings.

The wilderness that is discussed aggressively in Act Four, will be the streets of New York. We will not be the first to refer to New York City as a jungle full of wild animals, and we will not be the last.

There are several other scenes that will fall somewhere in between these two. For example, the dungeon where Cornwall gauges Gloucester’s eyes out will most likely be “The Back” of the restaurant. And the battle field could be an alleyway, etc.

Helpful Images:



Costume Breakdown

The costumes should not only set the scene and period but also show the deterioration of the characters as well. As Lear's mental capacity dissolves, so should his clothes.

Helpful Images

